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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

Monday, July 24, 1944, or later

Subject: "CARE OF SMALL CLEANING TOOLS." Information from equipment specialists,
U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Cleaning the cleaning tools is the final step in a good day's cleaning. It's one the careful housekeeper never neglects, even though it does take a few minutes extra when she'd like to rest or get on with some other piece of work. But, as the equipment specialists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture point out, if you don't put your brooms and brushes and dustpans and dustcloths away clean and ready to use again, you can't do a first rate cleaning job next time. Or you will have to start the next job by cleaning the tools first---you'll lose all your energy and momentum for doing the job itself.

Dirty equipment increases work, by smearing walls, or floors, or other surfaces. Besides, you don't want to store dirt, and as you know, dirty brushes and mops may develop sour or moldy odors, especially in hot weather. They may even attract insects. And certainly clean equipment is much pleasanter to work with. Above all, keeping cleaning tools in good condition helps to make them last---it's just one more kind of conservation homemakers need to practice in wartime.

You probably use your brooms and brushes more than any other small cleaning equipment. Here are some pointers about caring for them---all very simple. You need only soap and warm water. If the water is hard, you may need a water softener, such as borax, washing soda, or trisodium phosphate. If any part of a brush or broom is made of wire or a metal that will rust, be sure to dry it thoroughly and promptly after you wash it.

Old brooms will sweep as clean as new ones if their bristles are straight. Be sure to stand a broom upside down, or better yet, hang brooms up so that the

bristles clear the floor. Perhaps you have some of those clasp holders for brooms and mops in your cleaning tool closet. Or put screw eyes in the ends of the broom and mop handles and hang them from hooks high enough to keep the weight off the bristles, or bore a hole in the broom handle and run a string through for a loop.

Always turn a broom as you sweep, so the bristles will wear evenly. Hold it down close to the floor to avoid raising dust. You don't need to wash a broom every time you use it, of course. Particularly not a corn broom. Just wipe a corn broom off with a dry cloth when you put it away. If the broom gets so dirty you have to wash it, dip the broom up and down in a pail of warm soapy water, rinse in clear water, and shake it. Then hang it up by the handle to dry, preferably out in the sunshine. Of course, don't let the weight of the broom rest on the wet straws or it will bend them. If the broom corn spreads when you wash it, bind it with a strip of paper or rag so it will dry straight.

You can wash a fiber broom as often as you like---water won't hurt it. In fact, it seems to be good for the fiber, if you rinse off all the soap and hang the broom up so the fibers will dry straight. Washing seems to make palmetto, tampico, and palmyra brooms more durable. But if you let the fibers dry out of shape, it is hard to straighten them again.

You care for brushes in much the same way as brooms. Keep them clean, and keep the bristles straight. You need to clean brushes more often than brooms, because you use them to gather dirt and hold it and get the dirt into a dustpan. A dirty brush will scatter dirt or smear the surface you want to clean. After you wash a dustbrush in warm soapy water and rinse it in clear water, shake it well until the bristles or fibers are straight. You may want to add a tablespoonful of ammonia to each quart of soapy water for washing a very dirty dust-brush.

If the bristles of the brush are held together by a twisted wire, hang the brush up to dry. If the bristles are set in wood blocks, as in an ordinary scrub brush, dry it with the bristles down so the water will not run into the wood.

Straighten the bristles before drying, and if they are soft when they're wet, support the brush in some way so it does not rest its weight on the bristles. Use a coarse comb to get lint and thread out of brooms and brushes.

Dry scrub brushes with wooden backs in the sun. Keep most other brushes out of the hot sun. In winter, don't let brushes freeze. After using a toilet brush, wash it in hot soapy water, shake well, and dry quickly. Scald it occasionally and sun it to keep it fresh.

Wall brushes need to be especially clean or you'll smear the walls when you use them. Clean wall brushes of goat or horse hair like other brushes. Wall brushes of wool will only pick up dirt readily when they are clean and fluffy. So shake them frequently outdoors as you use them, and use a dry cleaning fluid to clean them.

Some of the other cleaning equipment that needs care may be a chamois for windows and mirrors; dust cloths, dust mops or dry mops; wet mops; dust pans; pails. Wash chamois in lukewarm suds, and rinse it thoroughly in lukewarm water. Handle chamois gently while it's wet, because it tears easily. Squeeze out as much water as possible, and dry in the shade. While it is drying, work it gently to keep it soft.

Of course it is a waste of time and motion for anyone to use a dirty dust cloth or a dirty floor mop. It may even injure the surface you are cleaning. So shake out a duster or mop frequently while you are cleaning, and when you have finished dusting wash it out in hot soapy water, and rinse and dry thoroughly before you store it. Oiled dusters need several soap washes. After the duster is clean you can re-oil it by putting a few drops of lemon or paraffin oil on it and putting it in a closed can for about 24 hours. Care for a dust mop just as you do a dust cloth.

Wipe the dust pan with either a dry or a damp cloth after using it, and hang it up with the edge to the wall, so the edge will not become bent. Wash a floor pail inside and out before you store it.

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